

# A CHRISTIAN CAVEAT

TO THE

## OLD AND NEW SABBATARIANS.

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BY EDWARD FISHER, ESQ.

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The following article is taken from the fifth edition of a work with the above title, printed in London, 1653. The book was written in defence of the 'orthodoxal doctrine of the Church of England,' respecting festivals, against the "Sabbatarian novelties," as they were called, of the Puritans. While it demolishes the claims set up on behalf of *Sunday* or *Lord's Day*, it fully establishes the claims of the *Sabbath* or *Seventh Day*. And it is worthy of note here, that it is not possible to refute any of the erroneous views in regard to the Sabbath and Lord's Day, without taking positions which necessarily lead to the observation of *the Seventh Day*. How much easier it would be to fasten the claims of the Sabbatic institution upon the consciences of men, if we were satisfied to take the fourth commandment *as it reads*, and enforce it by "*Thus saith the Lord*."

"The third opinion is, of the new Sabbatarians, who dream of a middle way betwixt a Jew and a Christian; and this they usually lay down in two propositions. The first is, *That the Lord's Day, or first day of the week, namely Sunday, may be called the Sabbath*: the next is, *That the observation of the Lord's Day is a moral duty, enjoined by God himself, and declared both by the doctrine and practice of Christ and his apostles*. The first appearance of this kind of teachers was in the year of our Lord 1595, near the end of the reign of Queen Elizabeth: and because they are neither able to produce direct Scripture, nor solid reason for what they say, they labor to support their conceits by fallacies, falsities and wrestings of God's holy word, as upon scanning their proofs will be manifest to the meanest capacity.

“For their first proposition, they alledge two reasons why the *Lord's Day* may be called *the Sabbath*. One is, because the Sabbath signifies *a rest*; and therefore the *Lord's Day* being a *rest*, may be called the Sabbath. But to this we answer, it is false that *the Sabbath* signifies *a rest*; for when by custom of speech a common name is restrained to a particular place, thing, or person, it then becomes a proper name, and so losing its community, does signify that only particular, unto which by custom of speech it is applied; as for instance, *the temple* is a common name, signifying *the Church*; yet in London, where by custom of speech this name, *The Temple*, is restrained to an Inns of Court, it is false and absurd to say you were at *the Temple*, and mean *the Church of St. Giles*. In like manner *the Sabbath* is a common name, signifying *the rest*; yet in the Christian Church, where by custom of speech, according to God's holy phrase throughout the Old and New Testament, this name, *the Sabbath*, is restrained to the Jewish weekly festival, it is false and absurd to speak of *the Sabbath*, and mean *the Lord's Day*. Their other reason why the *Lord's Day* may be called *the Sabbath*, is, because the *Lord's Day* succeeded in the room of the Sabbath. But if this argument be good, then may *baptism* be called *circumcision*, the *Lord's Supper* the *Passover*, and King *James* Queen *Elizabeth*.

“As for the second proposition, wherein they assert the *morality and divine institution of the Lord's Day*, we shall here notice only three of their reasons. The first is, because Adam, according to God's command, kept the Sabbath in the state of innocency. . . . But what is the sanctification of the Sabbath spoken of by Moses in the second chapter of Genesis, to our observing the *Lord's Day*? That was appointed to be kept on *the seventh* and *last* day of the week; this is kept on *the first* day of the week: that was the day in which God *rested* from his work of creation; this is the day in which God *began* to create the heavens and the earth: that was our *Saturday*; this is our *Sunday*. Their second proof for the morality of the *Lord's Day*, is from the fourth commandment, where they seek to corrupt the very text, and would persuade us that for *the seventh* day, we must read *a seventh* day; as if God did not there set apart a certain day of the week, but left it to man to keep which of the seven he pleased. Unto which we answer, that this conceit is not only against the letter of all our translations, but ever repugnant to the sense of the commandment; for the words

are express that God blessed and hallowed the Saobath day; that Sabbath day was *the seventh* day; that seventh day was *the day in which God rested from his six days' work of creation*. Nay, grant it were true (as these men would have) that this special precept does exactly oblige us, and that no particular day of the seven was by God appointed to be kept holy, then may we set apart Monday, or Tuesday, or any other day to God's service, as well as Sunday; and so, by their own argument, the Lord's Day is no more moral than any other day of the week. Their third proof is from the title or name, *Lord's Day*, which (say they) cannot be for any other reason, but because it is of the Lord's institution. We answer, this is false; for the Lord's Day was not so called because it was *instituted by the Lord*, but because it was *dedicated to the Lord*; as we commonly say, Saint Mary's Church, or Saint Peter's Church; which no man did ever imagine were built or founded by Saint Mary or Saint Peter."

Near the close of his book, after having examined each of the positions here referred to, he comes directly to his design, and says:—

"In vain, therefore, it is, and most absurd, for you our opponents to charge us with *befooling and misleading the people*. Your own *practice*, your own *doctrines*, shall bear witness betwixt us.

"You who say one while, that God did not appoint *the seventh day*, the day on which he rested, to be kept holy. but *a seventh day*, and so one day in seven be observed, no matter which of them; another while, that by this commandment God enjoins us to keep holy *the first day of the week* on which he *began* his work of creation—Do you not *befool and mislead the people*?

"You who (forgetting your own doctrine of the fourth commandment) do teach, that the keeping holy the first day of the week, or Lord's Day, was appointed and practised by Christ and his apostles, yet cannot produce so much as one *example* for it, much less a *precept*—Do you not *befool and mislead the people*?

"You who infer, because St. Paul, and the disciples at Troas, spent the whole night of the first day of the week in praying, preaching, and heavenly conference, in regard he was to leave them and depart on the morrow; *therefore*, St. Paul and the disciples at Troas met *that night* to keep holy *the day past*; *therefore* the disciples at Troas met *every first*

*day of the week*, to keep that day holy; *therefore* the Church at *Philippi*, the Church in *Citicia*, and *all* Christian Churches, did then keep holy the first day of the week; *therefore all the apostles* did constantly keep holy that day; *therefore* Christ and his apostles *appointed the first day of the week* to be for ever celebrated, instead of the Sabbath—Is not this pitiful logic? Do you not *be fool and mislead the people*?

“You who tell stories of an *old Sabbath* and a *new Sabbath*, a *Jewish Sabbath* and a *Christian Sabbath*, a Sabbath of the *seventh day* and a Sabbath of the *first day* of the week; that so you may sily fix the name *Sabbath* on the *Lord's Day*, and then persuade the simple and ignorant that all those texts of Scripture wherein mention is made of the *Sabbath day*, are intended of the *Lord's Day*; when indeed to call the *Lord's Day the Sabbath*, is as senseless as to call *Sunday Saturday*, or the *first day the last day* of the week; when throughout the Old and New Testament we have not the least intimation of any other weekly Sabbath, save the old, Jewish, seventh day Sabbath; when you yourselves confess that the name *Lord's Day*, is more proper and particular, and less obvious to exception, than the name *Sabbath*; and that the name *Sabbath* is in dignity inferior to both *Lord's Day* and *Sunday*—Do you not *be fool and mislead the people*?

You that condemn the yearly observance of Christ's birth-day as heathenish, yet acknowledge this feast to be a constitution of the ancient primitive Church—Do you not *be fool and mislead the people*?

“Take ye heed; these are not small matters; consider well with yourselves what it is to stand guilty before God of belying Christ and his apostles, and wilfully wresting the Holy Scriptures. Be advised; take time while time is to repent of those notorious slanders wherewith you have aspersed the ancient approved ways of God's worship; and let the sincerity of your repentance appear by the speedy abandoning of your unchristian practices and principles; lest the heavy judgment of seducers, *to wax worse and worse*, fall upon you, and God in the end *deliver you up to such strong delusions*, that you should believe your own lies.”